Promises and Compromises

Read how founding ideas and difficult choices shaped the United States.

5.C.5.3 "Read, discuss, and explain the Declaration of Independence and how it has shaped the United States of America. Explain the key debates and compromises of the Constitutional Convention..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two ideas from the Declaration, circle two problems the delegates hoped a stronger union would fix, and number the three Convention decisions about representation or the slave trade.

Building a New Nation

1. In 1776, the colonies declared independence from Britain. The Declaration of Independence said governments get their power from the people and should protect people's rights. It also said all men are created equal, yet slavery continued, and women and many others lacked equal rights. Later Americans used the Declaration's ideas to argue for freedom and equal treatment. Its words became a promise the country has worked to make real.

2. After independence, the states formed a loose union. Its national government could not easily raise money or settle trade disputes between states. Leaders feared that fights over trade and unrest could weaken the country. In 1787, delegates met at the Constitutional Convention to build a stronger, more stable union. But they disagreed about how states should share power in Congress, the part of government that makes laws.

3. The Virginia Plan tied votes in Congress to state population; the New Jersey Plan gave states equal votes. The Great Compromise created two houses: seats in the House depend on population, while each state has two senators. The Three-Fifths Compromise counted three of every five enslaved people for representation and direct taxes, though they could not vote. Congress could ban the international slave trade after 1808, but not before.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Americans later use an idea from the Declaration of Independence?

2. Why did delegates think a stronger union could help the country?

3. How did the Great Compromise address the disagreement between the Virginia and New Jersey Plans?

4. What did the Three-Fifths Compromise count, and what limit did delegates place on banning the international slave trade?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write four sentences for a museum label called “Promises and Limits.” Explain how the Declaration's idea of equality clashes with the Three-Fifths Compromise, name who gained power, and end with a question for visitors.

ANSWER KEY

Promises and Compromises

GRADE 5 · 5.C.5.3

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two ideas from the Declaration, circle two problems the delegates hoped a stronger union would fix, and number the three Convention decisions about representation or the slave trade. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Americans later use an idea from the Declaration of Independence?	**They used its ideas about rights and equality to argue for freedom and equal treatment.**
2	Why did delegates think a stronger union could help the country?	**The national government struggled to raise money and settle trade disputes. Delegates feared trade fights and unrest could weaken the country.**
3	How did the Great Compromise address the disagreement between the Virginia and New Jersey Plans?	**It created a House with seats based on population, as the Virginia Plan favored, and a Senate with equal representation for each state, as the New Jersey Plan favored.**
4	What did the Three-Fifths Compromise count, and what limit did delegates place on banning the international slave trade?	**It counted three of every five enslaved people for representation and direct taxes, though they could not vote. Congress could not ban the international slave trade before 1808.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Declaration said all men are created equal. At the Convention, delegates counted three of every five enslaved people to decide representation, but those people could not vote. This gave slave states more power while failing to honor the Declaration's promise for enslaved people. How could the country work toward that promise?

Accept explanations in students' own words that connect the Declaration's ideas to later calls for equality. For the museum label, look for four sentences that identify the conflict, name slave states as gaining power, and end with a question.